

MONTHLY REPORT - INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

April, 1946

This is a year of decision. As surely as it would be if heralded by trumpets, we are moving into a great crescendo of employment opportunity for a disadvantaged group of citizens of New Jersey. The fact is, though, the crescendo is not big enough to fill the auditorium. Fields of opportunities for Negroes - a keyboard on which is being played one of the most serious scores of our history. Telephone technicians, sales clerks, industrial personnel, a myriad of strategic placements are accomplished facts; and now the notes of Public Service buses Negro men, agreements, but no finished blend. Communications, Retail trades, industry; and now transportation, the building trades, and household employment.

The last three named fields are our present problems. The weight of them is straining an already well seasoned Industrial Relations Department. During April, the Department held conferences with Public Service Corporation and Public Service Coordinated Transport Company, to get Negro bus drivers; with Building trades officials to get apprenticeship training for Negroes; with Prudential Life Insurance Company, to get Negro girls in white collar jobs; with more than two score individuals and groups to effect some standards for the field of household employment. All of these were conferences to bring about over-all opportunity for Negroes to secure a job on the basis of their own choice, and qualifications as easily as can other American citizens.

Turning from social planning to social stimulation, the Industrial Relations Secretary gave five public addresses, speaking to a total of more than 1500 different individuals from all walks of life. In Morristown, presented by the Morristown Board of Education and Morristown Service Council, the Secretary spoke to a packed high school auditorium, interpreting present social forces and needs. That we are on the right track may be seen from the fact that applause following the address, lasted for five minutes before being drowned out by the Morristown High School Band.

What action we may take in another instance, is a problem for us all. The Industrial Relations Secretary was asked by the Information and Education Officer of the Weequahic Park Army Base (AOTASC), to help plan an educational program for the soldiers based at the Park. Each soldier is required to take one hour of orientation each week, and the I&E Officer has charge of content. The Secretary was asked to be the first of a series of white and Negro speakers, from Newark and environs. The address was to be given in May. However, the Secretary finds that Negro and white soldiers are continuously segregated, in work, in living accommodations (including sleeping barracks and eating barracks), and in orientation periods.

Cursory investigation indicates that such segregation is largely at the disposition of the Commanding Officer for an Army base; that not in all such northern bases are Negroes segregated, particularly for orientation, classes, etc. Movies are shown to white soldiers one night and to Negro soldiers the next night. - Question: We should probably not make any move at all unless we intend to wage an all out effort to change such segregation within the city limits of Newark; yet, should we allow this practice to go unchallenged? The Negro soldiers stated to the Urban League Industrial Relations Secretary that the jobs they are assigned are definitely not likely to aid them in finding decent employment when they are discharged from the service. The "wonderful skills" available in AOTASC are just not for the Negro soldier. That highlights the problem.

In addition to the five occasions for as many public addresses from the Industrial Relations Secretary, he also arranged and/or attended ten closed meetings and nine private conferences. Of the ten meetings, three were toward Negro bus drivers, two were toward Standards in Household Employment, and five were involved in singular action. Of the eight conferences, two were toward Negro bus drivers, two were toward Standards in Household Employment, two were toward Negro white collar workers in the Insurance field, and three involved one-of-a-kind action. A list of the names of 55 industrialist and business firms was compiled for the use of the Building Fund Comm. DISCRIMINATION Two investigations of discrimination were made by the Industrial Relations Secretary at Western Electric Company and General Electric Company. Peculiar practices developing after settlement of strikes in both plants, showed the former company not hiring Negro clerical workers (in spite of great need for clerical workers), and the latter company refusing to recall or hire any Negro workers at all.

For teaching purposes the Secretary carried the student field worker, Mr. Ward, to each plant.

The results at each plant have been the hiring of several Negroes; in the case of General Electric, in spite of the Personnel Mgrs. declaration that he would hire only Polish workers from the time of the strike settlement. That this declaration was an accomplished fact was reported to us by the Executive Secretary of the Newark YMCA, also. According to reports from the Negro shop steward, about a dozen Negro workers have been hired since we visited the plant.

EMPLOYMENT Outside the realm of social planning, counselling service, and stimulation, the Department helped more than one hundred different persons during the month. Seventeen men and women were counselled about a variety of problems, eight of these persons were Veterans. There were 98 persons who applied for job referrals - 51 women and 45 men. 79 referrals were made of 40 women and 39 men. One woman for whom we helped effect appointment to the staff of the local Newark USES office, disappointed us by not accepting the appointment. - We still have much work cut out for us, all around our faces.

In addition to the 79 referrals noted above, there were, in the household employment field, 28 referrals for day work, 8 for part time work, and 1 for a full time job.